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1291386

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

United States Patent and Trademark Office

March 02, 2005

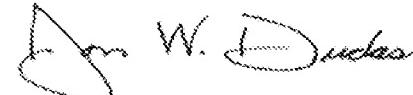
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APPLICATION THAT MET THE REQUIREMENTS TO BE GRANTED A
FILING DATE.

APPLICATION NUMBER: 60/541,975

FILING DATE: *February 05, 2004*

RELATED PCT APPLICATION NUMBER: PCT/US05/03553

Certified by



Under Secretary of Commerce
for Intellectual Property
and Director of the United States
Patent and Trademark Office



16085 U.S.PTO
020504

PTO/SB/16 (01-04)

Approved for use through 07/31/2006. OMB 0651-0032

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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PROVISIONAL APPLICATION FOR PATENT COVER SHEET

This is a request for filing a PROVISIONAL APPLICATION FOR PATENT under 37 CFR 1.53(c).

Express Mail Label No. EV 413038076 US

3855 U.S.PTO
60/541975
020504**INVENTOR(S)**

Given Name (first and middle [if any])	Family Name or Surname	Residence (City and either State or Foreign Country)
Virgil Allen Jason	Watson Bender	Salem, Iowa Mt. Pleasant, Iowa

Additional inventors are being named on the _____ separately numbered sheets attached hereto

TITLE OF THE INVENTION (500 characters max)**SIGNAGE CONSTRUCTION METHOD**

Direct all correspondence to: CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

 Customer Number:

34082

OR Firm or Individual Name

Address

Address

City

Country

State

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ENCLOSED APPLICATION PARTS (check all that apply)

- Specification Number of Pages 8
 Drawing(s) Number of Sheets 6
 Application Data Sheet. See 37 CFR 1.76

CD(s), Number _____
 Other (specify) _____

METHOD OF PAYMENT OF FILING FEES FOR THIS PROVISIONAL APPLICATION FOR PATENT

- Applicant claims small entity status. See 37 CFR 1.27.
 A check or money order is enclosed to cover the filing fees.
 The Director is hereby authorized to charge filing fees or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account Number: 50-2098
 Payment by credit card. Form PTO-2038 is attached.

FILING FEE
Amount (\$)

\$80.00

The invention was made by an agency of the United States Government or under a contract with an agency of the United States Government.

 No. Yes, the name of the U.S. Government agency and the Government contract number are: _____

[Page 1 of 2]

Date FEBRUARY 5, 2004

Respectfully submitted

SIGNATURE

TYPED or PRINTED NAME DONALD H. ZARLEY

REGISTRATION NO. 18,543

(if appropriate)

Docket Number: P06721US0

TELEPHONE 515-558-0200

USE ONLY FOR FILING A PROVISIONAL APPLICATION FOR PATENT

This collection of information is required by 37 CFR 1.51. The information is required to obtain or retain a benefit by the public which is to file (and by the USPTO to process) an application. Confidentiality is governed by 35 U.S.C. 122 and 37 CFR 1.14. This collection is estimated to take 8 hours to complete, including gathering, preparing, and submitting the completed application form to the USPTO. Time will vary depending upon the individual case. Any comments on the amount of time you require to complete this form and/or suggestions for reducing this burden, should be sent to the Chief Information Officer, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, U.S. Department of Commerce, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450. DO NOT SEND FEES OR COMPLETED FORMS TO THIS ADDRESS. SEND TO: Mail Stop Provisional Application, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.

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FEE TRANSMITTAL for FY 2004

Effective 10/01/2003. Patent fees are subject to annual revision.

Applicant claims small entity status. See 37 CFR 1.27

TOTAL AMOUNT OF PAYMENT (\$ 80.00)

Complete if Known

Application Number	
Filing Date	
First Named Inventor	Virgil Allen Watson, et al.
Examiner Name	
Art Unit	
Attorney Docket No.	P06721US0

METHOD OF PAYMENT (check all that apply)

Check Credit card Money Order Other None

Deposit Account:

Deposit Account Number	50-2098
Deposit Account Name	ZARLEY LAW FIRM, P.L.C.

The Director is authorized to: (check all that apply)

- Charge fee(s) indicated below Credit any overpayments
 Charge any additional fee(s) or any underpayment of fee(s)
 Charge fee(s) indicated below, except for the filing fee to the above-identified deposit account.

FEE CALCULATION

1. BASIC FILING FEE

Large Entity	Small Entity	Fee Description	Fee Paid
Fee Code (\$)	Fee Code (\$)		
1001 770	2001 385	Utility filing fee	
1002 340	2002 170	Design filing fee	
1003 530	2003 265	Plant filing fee	
1004 770	2004 385	Reissue filing fee	
1005 160	2005 80	Provisional filing fee	80.00
SUBTOTAL (1)		(\$ 80.00)	

2. EXTRA CLAIM FEES FOR UTILITY AND REISSUE

Total Claims	Independent Claims	Multiple Dependent	Extra Claims	Fee from below	Fee Paid
			-20** =	X	=
			- 3** =	X	=

Large Entity	Small Entity	Fee Description
Fee Code (\$)	Fee Code (\$)	
1202 18	2202 9	Claims in excess of 20
1201 86	2201 43	Independent claims in excess of 3
1203 290	2203 145	Multiple dependent claim, if not paid
1204 86	2204 43	** Reissue independent claims over original patent
1205 18	2205 9	** Reissue claims in excess of 20 and over original patent
SUBTOTAL (2)		(\$ 0.00)

**or number previously paid, if greater; For Reissues, see above*

3. ADDITIONAL FEES

Large Entity Small Entity

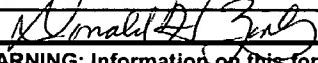
Fee Code (\$)	Fee Code (\$)	Fee Description	Fee Paid
1051 130	2051 65	Surcharge - late filing fee or oath	
1052 50	2052 25	Surcharge - late provisional filing fee or cover sheet	
1053 130	1053 130	Non-English specification	
1812 2,520	1812 2,520	For filing a request for ex parte reexamination	
1804 920*	1804 920*	Requesting publication of SIR prior to Examiner action	
1805 1,840*	1805 1,840*	Requesting publication of SIR after Examiner action	
1251 110	2251 55	Extension for reply within first month	
1252 420	2252 210	Extension for reply within second month	
1253 950	2253 475	Extension for reply within third month	
1254 1,480	2254 740	Extension for reply within fourth month	
1255 2,010	2255 1,005	Extension for reply within fifth month	
1401 330	2401 165	Notice of Appeal	
1402 330	2402 165	Filing a brief in support of an appeal	
1403 290	2403 145	Request for oral hearing	
1451 1,510	1451 1,510	Petition to institute a public use proceeding	
1452 110	2452 55	Petition to revive - unavoidable	
1453 1,330	2453 665	Petition to revive - unintentional	
1501 1,330	2501 665	Utility issue fee (or reissue)	
1502 480	2502 240	Design issue fee	
1503 640	2503 320	Plant issue fee	
1460 130	1460 130	Petitions to the Commissioner	
1807 50	1807 50	Processing fee under 37 CFR 1.17(q)	
1806 180	1806 180	Submission of Information Disclosure Stmt	
8021 40	8021 40	Recording each patent assignment per property (times number of properties)	
1809 770	2809 385	Filing a submission after final rejection (37 CFR 1.129(a))	
1810 770	2810 385	For each additional invention to be examined (37 CFR 1.129(b))	
1801 770	2801 385	Request for Continued Examination (RCE)	
1802 900	1802 900	Request for expedited examination of a design application	

Other fee (specify) _____

*Reduced by Basic Filing Fee Paid

SUBTOTAL (3) (\$ 0.00)

(Complete if applicable)

Name (Print/Type)	DONALD H. ZARLEY	Registration No. (Attorney/Agent)	18,543	Telephone	515-558-0200
Signature					
Date	FEBRUARY 5, 2004				

WARNING: Information on this form may become public. Credit card information should not be included on this form. Provide credit card information and authorization on PTO-2038.

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Signage Construction Method Disclosure Of Invention

Signs are used to convey information and are in wide spread use to provide warning, information, traffic control, advertisement, etc. Current sign construction techniques include printing on a flexible substrate such as vinyl and applying this label directly to rigid surfaces such as walls, posts, etc. Signs are also printed directly on, or the aforementioned flexible label is applied to a semi-rigid substrate of plastic. Signs are also printed directly on, or the aforementioned label is affixed to a substrate of wood, aluminum or steel. Affixing is commonly done with a pressure sensitive adhesive layer applied to the reverse side of the flexible label. Signs used indoors can be subjected to wear, vandalism, etc. Signs used outdoors are subjected to the destructive forces of ultraviolet light, corrosives, wind and thermal variation. The environment in which the sign will be used dictates the required construction technique.

This invention relates to a construction method that cost effectively and easily addresses the previously mentioned conditions. In general, the method involves preprinting a sign on a flexible thermoplastic substrate or label, placing the label in an injection mold and injecting hot thermoplastic to fill the mold. The preprinted label is on a substrate of thermoplastic that is chosen to be compatible with the injected thermoplastic and the sign thermally and permanently fuses to the injected plastic. This process is commonly referred to as In Mold Labeling or In Line Graphics. Although this process is widely known, it, in combination with claims and manufacturing method, provides a new and useful means for the construction of signs.

We specifically claim;

- 1). A method where the environmental end-use requirements can be met by selection of thermoplastic material. As examples, cold weather flexibility could be enhanced by use of PPO and environments requiring impact resistance could be satisfied with polycarbonate. Polyethylene could be used in highly corrosive environments and Nylon could be used in high abrasion applications.
- 2). A method where the graphical requirements of a sign can be met by selection of appropriate printing method. Low quality graphical requirements can be printed with flexography and high quality graphics could be printed with lithography or gravure. Digital graphics such as ink jet and laser can be used for short run or personalized signs. Product cost is directly affected by selection of printing process. Printing equipment in wide spread use require that the printed substrate be thin and flexible (e.g. paper, films, foils) in either sheet feed or web form. Standard printing equipment will not print directly on rigid substrates such as wood, steel or aluminum.

- 3). A method where environmental end-use requirements for rigidity or strength can be met by selection of sign thickness. Semi-rigid signs would be relatively thin, on the order of .080 thick, while rigid signs would be .1875" to .250" thick. Sign thickness would be controlled by mold cavity depth.
- 4). A claim that sign mounting and orientation features can be easily and cost effectively incorporated into the mold. (See figure 1) Molded plastic features whose cross sections compliment the cross sections of mounting posts or stakes.
- 5). A claim that mounting holes and point-of-purchase display holes can be incorporated by installing core pins in the mold. This eliminates the requirement for manufacturers or end-users to drill or punch holes.
- 6). A claim that features such as ribs or stiffeners, designed to increase sign strength and rigidity, can easily and cost effectively be included in the mold. (See figure 2).
- 7). A claim that features designed to assemble two signs together back to back can be easily incorporated into the mold. (See figure 3).
- 8). The claim that features intended to allow signs to be assembled edge to edge can be easily incorporated into a mold. (See figure 4).
- 9). The claim that ultraviolet light resistance can be enhanced by selection of thermoplastic material, label material and ink.
- 10). A claim that abrasion resistance can be improved by printing the graphics on the reverse side of the label thereby exposing only the substrate of the label to the environment.
- 11). The claim that molded signs can be manufactured with similar performance specifications to aluminum or steel signs with a substantial reduction in cost and weight.
- 12.)

Manufacturing Method

The preferred manufacturing method utilizes either high or low pressure injection molding equipment, an industry standard three axis robot with specialized end of arm tooling, a specially designed injection mold, a proprietary label hopper and a proprietary guidance system for accurate placement of the label in the mold. The manufacturing method is designed to substantially reduce direct labor, to minimize production cycle times by eliminating wasted or redundant machinery motion and maximize product quality.

Standard injection molding configurations and procedures (See figure 5) have a single station injection molding machine injecting plastic through the stationary platen and into

the "A" half of the mold through a sprue bushing. All cores needed to create holes in the sign, and all molded features needed for mounting and orientation would be incorporated into the "B" side of the mold. Upon mold opening, the finished part would normally stick to and travel with the "B" side. Necessarily, to remove the finished part from the "B" side, the ejector system is incorporated under the "B" side of the mold.

In this configuration, and to make signs, the label would have to be placed on the "A" side of the mold prior to injecting plastic resulting in the requirement to have a hole in the center of the label to allow the molten plastic to pass through to the mold cavity, or alternately, incorporate a runner system that routes plastic around to one or more sides of the cavity. Alternatively, the label would be placed on the "B" side of the mold requiring removal of the part by the robot prior to placing the label. This requires two trips by the robot for each sign produced increasing production time.

In this configuration, and to make signs, the label could be placed on the "B" side of the mold but would require that the robot remove the finished part, deposit it on a conveyor, pick-up the next label in sequence and place it in the "B" side. This arrangement requires that the robot make two trips into the mold at each opening thereby doubling the time required to manufacture signs.

The preferred method (See figure 6) places cores, features and ejector system on the "A" side of the mold. The ejector system is operated with hydraulic cylinders. In operation the label is placed in the cavity on the "B" side of the mold by the robot and the then previously molded sign is removed from the "A" side of the mold by the robot. After retracting from the machine and removing the finished sign, the robot deposits the finished sign on a conveyor while the molding machine closes and injects the next sign in sequence. After releasing the finished sign the robot travels to the label hopper to pick up the next label in preparation for insertion in the mold.

Specifically we claim;

- 1). A manufacturing method that allows placement of a label on the "B" side of the mold and removal of the finished sign from the "A" side of the mold with only one entrance into the mold by the robot and end of arm tooling.
- 2). A manufacturing method that eliminates a runner system and injects directly into the mold cavity.
- 3). A method that when employing a heated sprue bushing, eliminates the need to manually trim the sign.
- 4). The claim that reverse ejecting places all ejector pins on the back of the sign. This eliminates marking on the label side of the sign that normally occurs with ejector systems.

- 5). The claim that an end of arm guidance system incorporated into the mold and label hopper accurately and repetitively positions labels in the mold.
- 6). A label hopper design that incorporates adjustment means that provide for label placement adjustment in the "X", "Y" and skew or rotational positions.
- 7). The claim that when taken collectively, claims #5 and #6 permit adjustment of label position and skew in the mold placement position by adjusting the skew and pick-up position of the label in the hopper.
- 8). An end of arm guidance system that is comprised of a clearance hole located in a non-part position in the mold covered with a thin plate with close tolerance guidance hole. This thin plate guidance hole is engaged by a locating pin or stud mounted on the end of arm tooling. A secondary thin plate guidance hole is incorporated into the label hopper in the same relative position to the label as is in the mold. During pick-up and placement of the label, the guidance pin engages the thin plate guidance hole and deflects or guides the end of arm tooling to the same relative position repeatedly.
- 9). A thin plate guidance hole over a larger clearance hole in the mold and label hopper to accurately position end of arm tooling in the "X" and "Y" positions. This arrangement minimizes "Z" alignment issues that are very difficult to achieve in normal production conditions.
- 10). A manufacturing method that can easily produce groups or sets of signs of various numbers and graphics. If a sign set includes three of one graphic and four of another graphic the labels can be pre-collated into the required number and type prior to being placed in the label hopper. This would substantially reduce the cost of pick and pack order fulfillment.
- 11).

QUESTION & ANSWERS FROM ROMO (LABEL MAKER)

1. Is the printing on the reverse side? No. The printing is on the surface. Unless the customer specifically asks for sub-surface printing, it is common to print on the surface. An instance of sub-surface printing would be for scratch resistance in cases where the end use would be subject to severe abrasive conditions. Also, sub-surface printing would require using clear material which is more expensive.
2. How durable is the label in the outdoor environment? The coating on the in-mold decals, as quoted, is 7 to 10 years outdoors.
3. Is there a certain ink being used to accommodate the outdoor environment? The inks used are all part of the outdoor construction. The proprietary clear coat we apply is what protects the decals from the UV and extends the life of the sign/decal.
4. How reflective is the material? The construction, as quoted, is not reflective. However, the visibility of the signs is as good as, or better, than current signs sold by Seton. In order to have reflectivity, it would require printing on reflective materials. Unfortunately, we have not been able to find a compatible reflective material for in-molding.
5. What are the maximum high and low temperatures the labels will withstand? The inks and clear coats will easily operate with the -40F to 212F. In fact, the inks and clear coats are designed to withstand over 400F.
6. What are the benefits of in-mold graphics? Many. As we have discussed before, traditional decals/signs are printed on metal or plastic surfaces. Inks used are UV or solvent based. The inks by themselves will last 2 to 3 years with appreciable fade towards the end of that timed cycle. To combat the fading problem, manufacturers use either a laminated clear polyester, etc. or use a clear ink to protect the printed ink colors. In the case of a laminated polyester, there is adhesive involved and the adhesive begins to fail with age and amount of UV light. Laminating a clear material will add about 1-1/5 to 2 years to normal constructions. To achieve longer life, a special over laminated material called Tedlar can be used. However, Tedlar is very expensive and will only add about 3 years to the total decal life.

In the case of our Zynicast clear coat, we developed this coating specifically for scratch resistance and outdoor use. It is a clear coating that enhances the decal life to 7 to 10 years with little fading. We developed this coating to enhance our line of in-mold decal constructions and to also meet with demand from the outdoor construction, RV, ATV and power equipment markets.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FROM LABEL MAKER

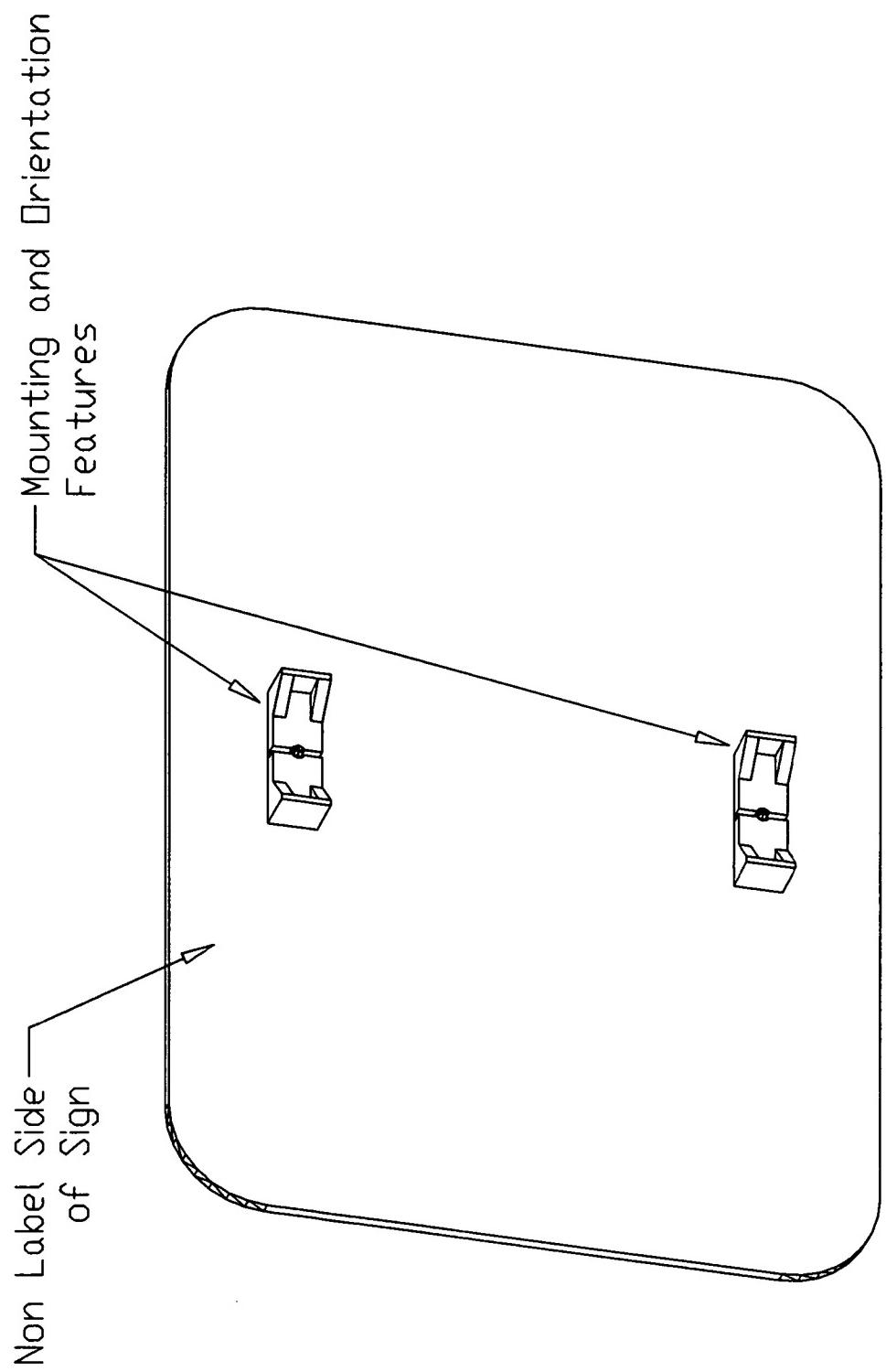
- Is the printing on the reverse side? Why or Why Not?
- The graphics may be printed either on the first or second surface. The key variable for Lomont Molding if the parts are second surface, will be proper gate location and type of gate, which will provide part with no ink wash. First surface printed graphics will not be susceptible to ink wash.
- How durable is the label adhesion in the outdoor environment? Because we will be utilizing polypropylene sheet stock, we will accomplish a natural chemical bond that will be virtually indestructible. The adhesion will be a non-issue in that the label will not delaminate.
- Is there a certain ink being used to accommodate the outdoor environment? Serigraph will be utilizing UV inks that will be approximately 5 year outdoor weather able. Proper Spec testing may need to be done to substantiate this for Lomont.
- How reflective is the material? Please advise what you are looking for in this item. The material does have some reflectivity to it, but if you have a desired level of reflectivity please let us know this.
- What is the maximum high and low temperatures the labels will withstand?
- I am still looking into this, however, the -40 F to 212F as stated by Seton in their catalog is well within the labels specification. The actual Temperatures will exceed those temps. I will forward more precise information upon my receipt.
- Detail the benefits of In-Line Graphics? IMD or In-mold decorating is the term Serigraph uses when discussing this process. IMD is a process that uses a flat or formed sheet of printed plastic, which is then inserted into the tool. Resin is shot behind the IMD part to create the complete, decorated part. Some of the benefits of IMD are as follows:
 - Compound curves can be effectively decorated. Graphic inserts can be pre-formed to conform to the curves of the mold. Serigraph has several methods of forming plastics that can be used: vacuum forming, high pressure air forming, hydro and cold forming. Selection of the best method is determined by the specifics of the application.
 - The result is generally tamper proof, in that there is no edge or exposed seam. This same feature has the added benefit of improved aesthetics, as the graphic insert and the molding resin become one seamless piece.
 - It can simplify manufacturing, thereby decreasing total cost. If post mold decorating is used, it is often done by direct printing, painting, heat transfer decorating or application of an appliqué with a pressure sensitive adhesive.
 - Either molding the plastic over the printed surface, or by over coating the graphics with an abrasion and scratch – resistant printed clear coat can enhance durability of the graphics.
 - Second surface graphics provide superior chemical and abrasion resistance.
 - Registered graphics over curves are possible. IMD is just about the only method of decoration that allows for graphics to be registered 3 – dimensionally.

- Backlight may be easily incorporated.
- Environmentally friendly.
- No auxiliary equipment not required.
- No label look.
- Reduction of scrap
- Reduction of handling.

CLAIM

1. A method of creating signage for viewing by persons in a traffic area accessible by the random passage of persons through the area, comprising:
providing a mold having a planar area substantially equal to the size of the sign desired;
placing in the mold a thin layer of plastic material upon which the subject matter of the desired sign is printed and wherein the layer of plastic material is substantially equal to the planar surface of the mold;
placing a quantity of heated molding material in the mold and over the layer of sheet material to cast a planar sign having the size and shape of the mold;
maintaining the temperature of the molding material at a sufficient temperature to cause the molding material to fuse to the thin layer of material;
allowing the molding material to harden;
removing the hardened molded material with the thin layer of material fused thereto from the mold;
and erecting the sign in the traffic area.

Figure 1



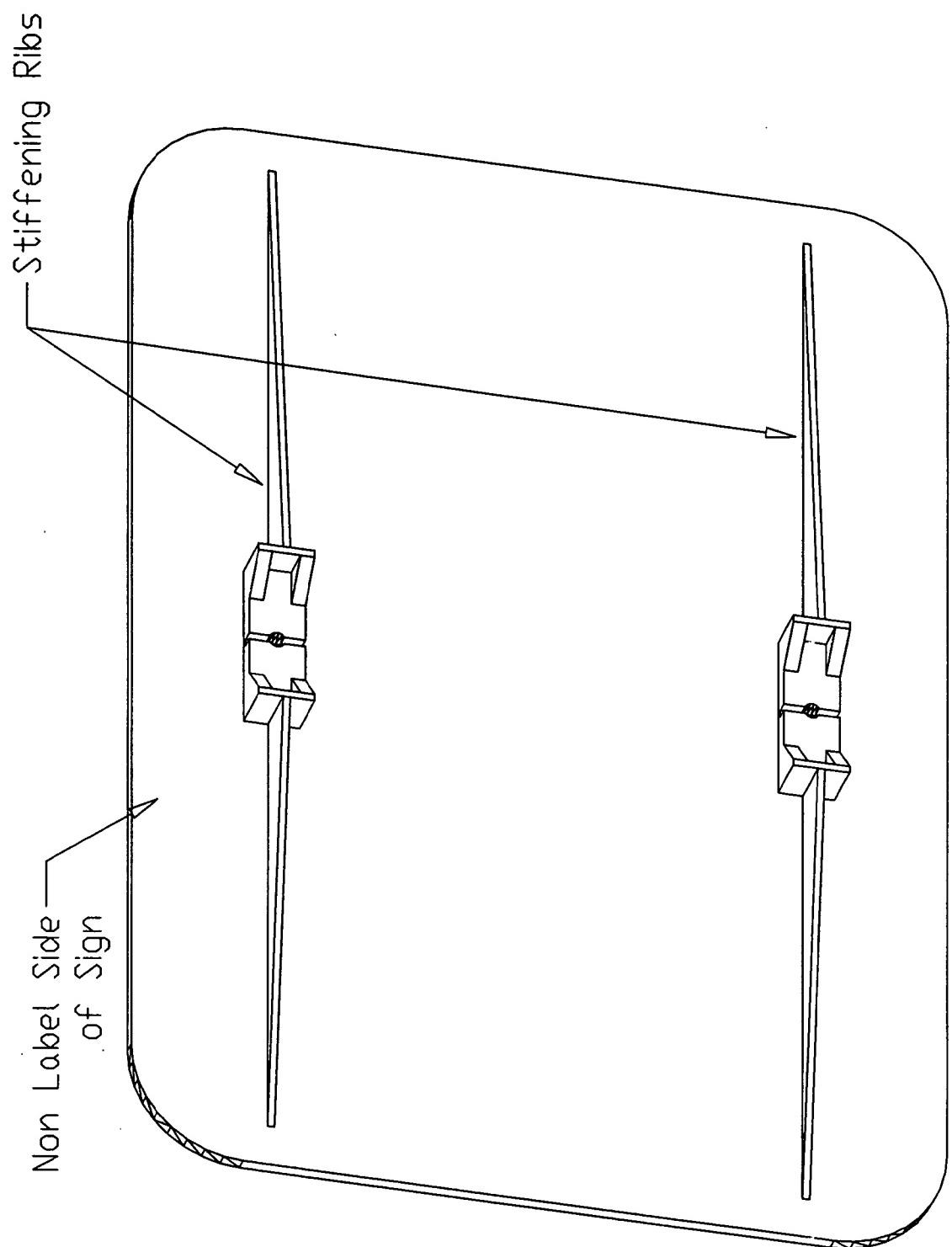
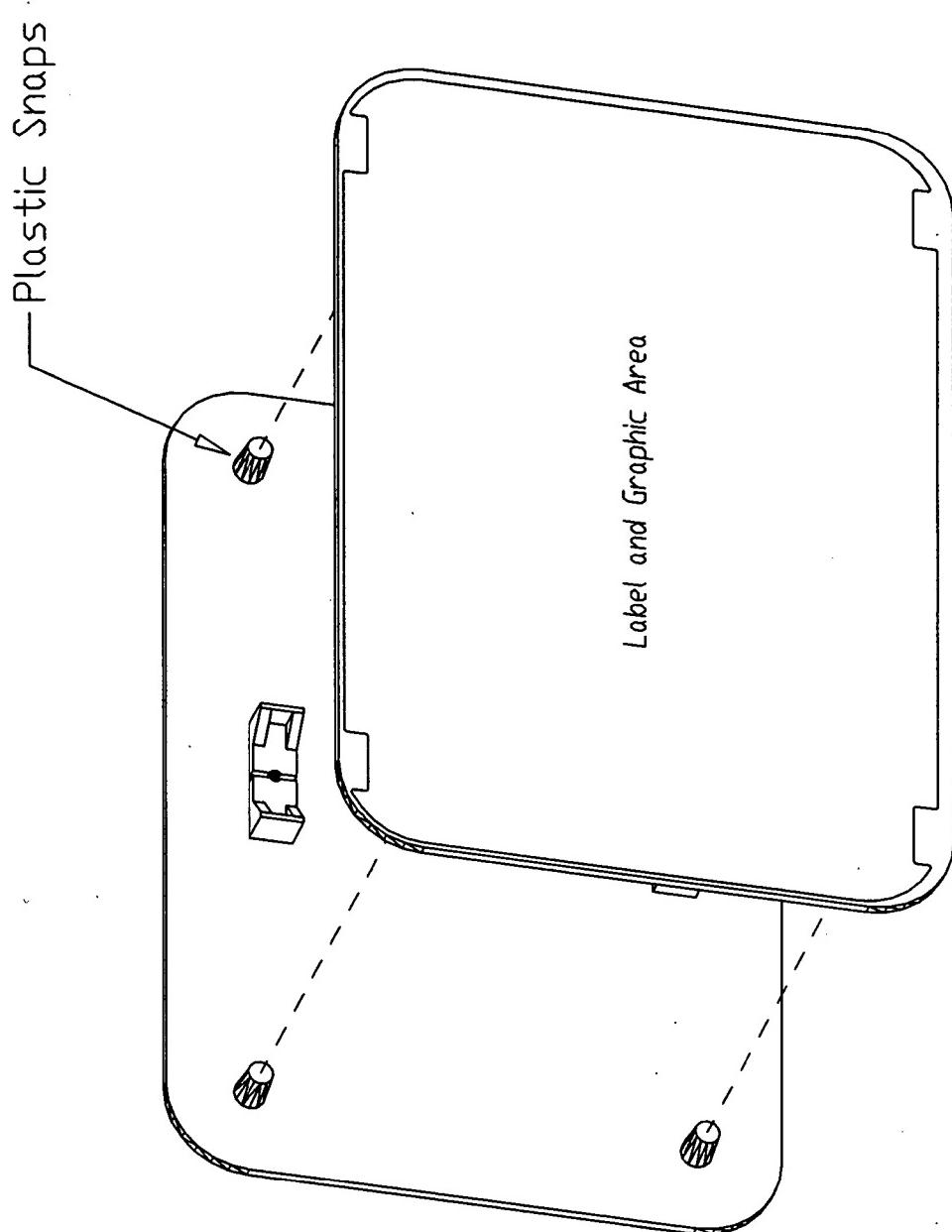


Figure 2

Figure 3



Joining Methods Include
Glue, Screw, Ultrasonic Weld
Molded Interlocking Tabs

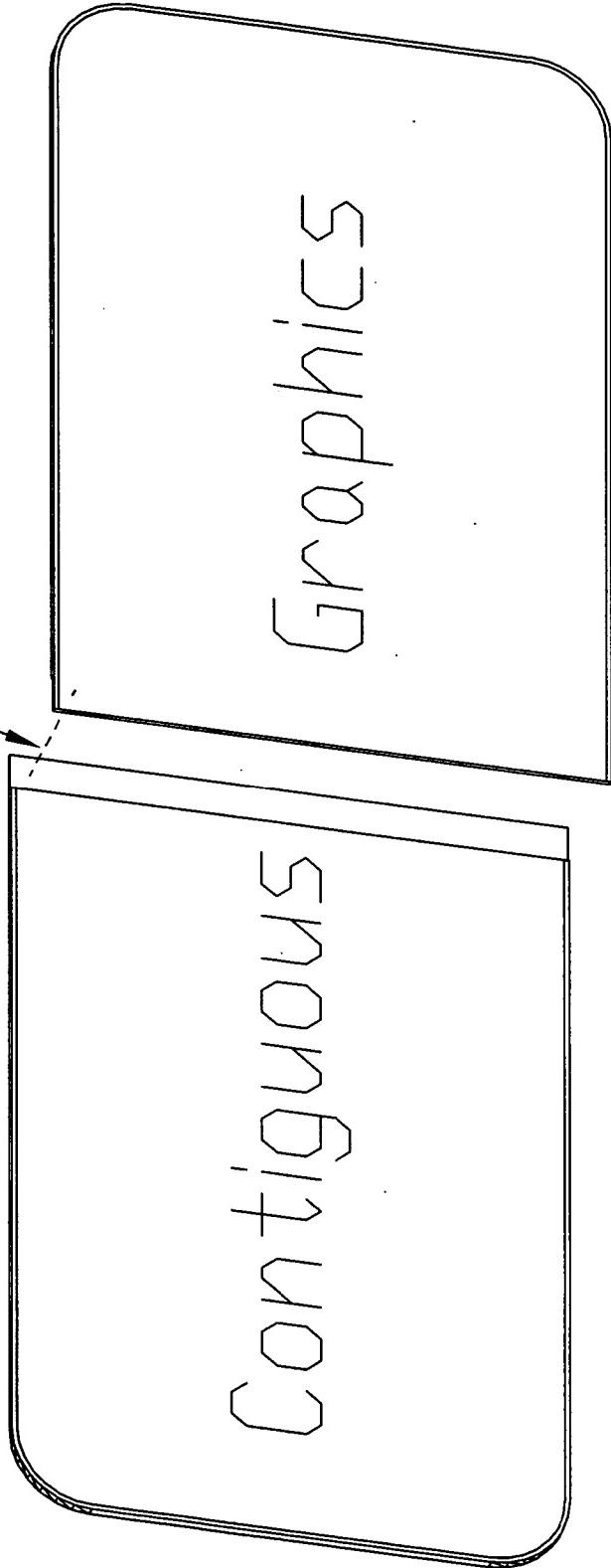


Figure 4

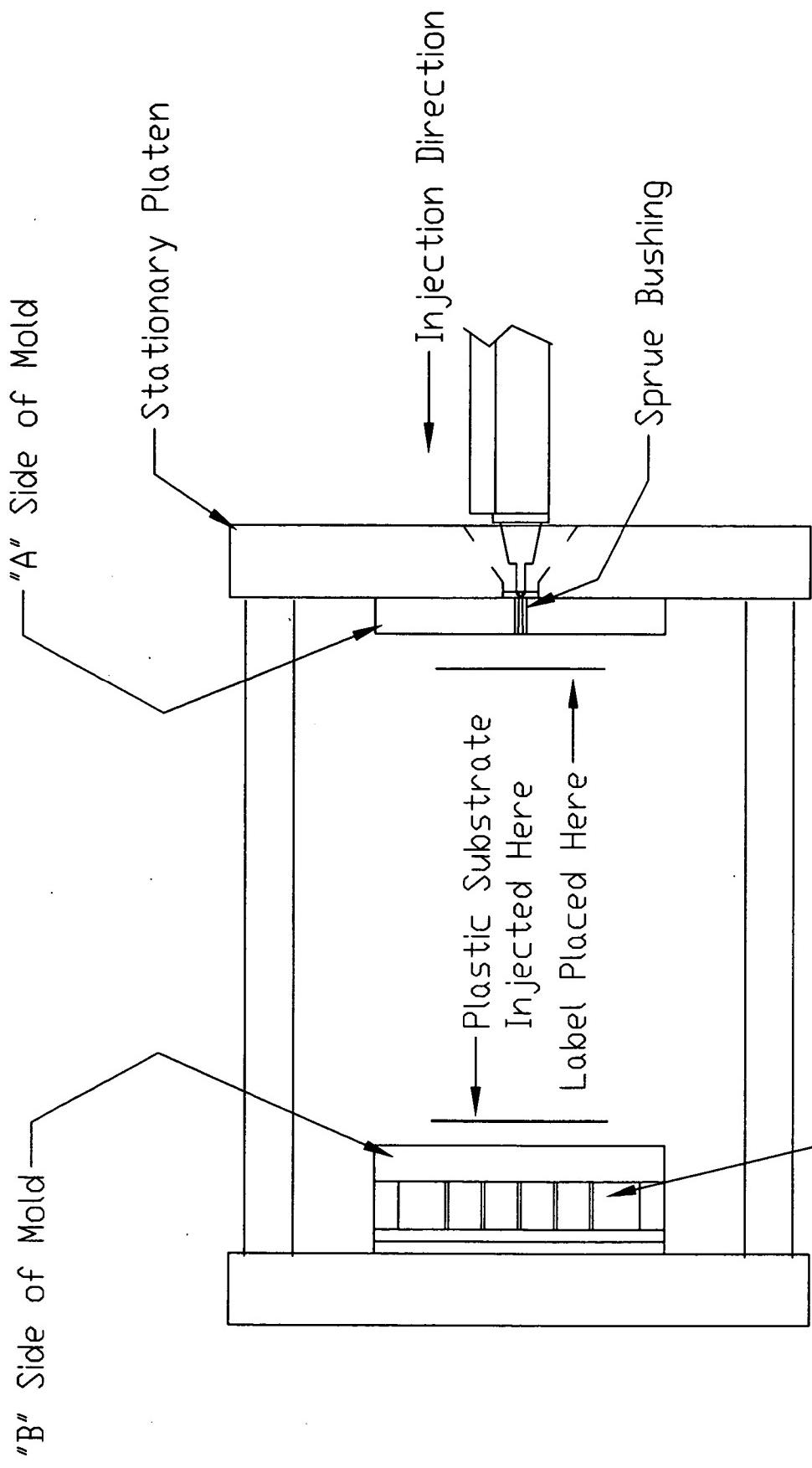


Figure 5
Ejector System

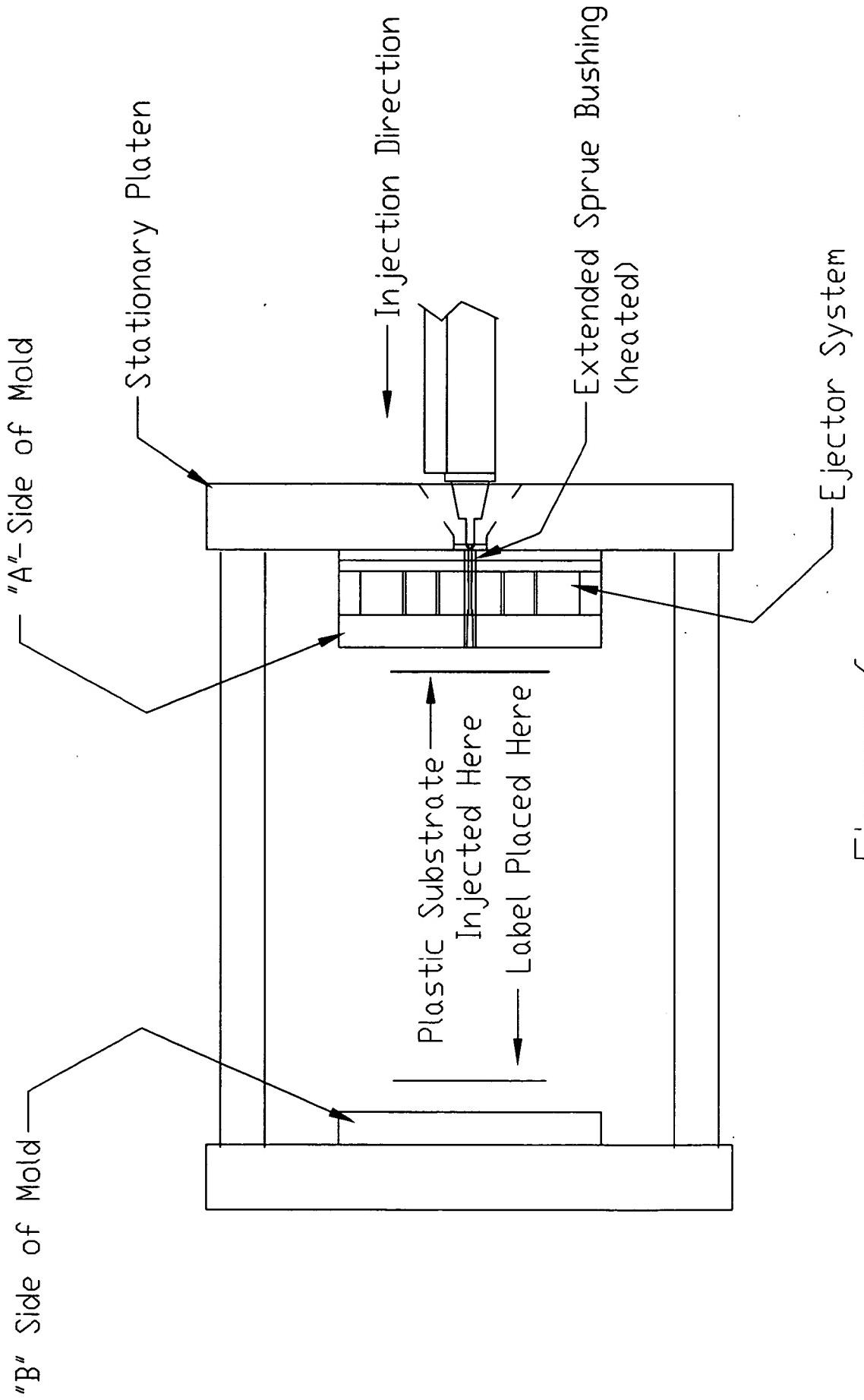


Figure 6

Application Data Sheet

Application Information

Application Type::	Provisional
Subject Matter::	Utility
Suggested Classification::	N/A
Suggested Group Art Unit::	N/A
CD-ROM or CD-R::	N/A
Number of CD disks::	N/A
Number of copies of CDs::	N/A
Sequence submission::	N/A
Computer Readable Form (CRF)::	N/A
Title::	SIGNAGE CONSTRUCTION METHOD
Attorney Docket Number::	P06721US0
Request for Early Publication::	No
Request for Non-Publication::	No
Suggested Drawing Figure::	1
Total Drawing Sheets::	6
Small Entity::	Yes
Petition included::	No
Licensed US Govt Agency::	No
Contract or Grant Numbers::	N/A
Secrecy Order in Parent Appl::	No

Applicant Information

Applicant Authority Type::	Inventor
Primary Citizenship Country::	US
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Applicant Authority Type::	Inventor
Primary Citizenship Country::	US
Status::	Full capacity
Given Name::	Jason
Family Name::	Bender
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State or Province of Residence::	IA
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State or Province of mailing address::	IA
Country of mailing address::	US
Postal or Zip Code of mailing address::	52641

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Country of mailing address::	US
Postal Zip Code or mailing	
Address::	50309-2350
Phone number::	515-558-0200
FAX number::	515-558-7790
E-Mail address::	<u>dzarley@zarleylaw.com</u>

Representative Information

Representative	34082	
Customer Number::		

Representative Designation::	Registration Number::	Representative Name::
Primary	18,543	Donald H. Zarley
Associate	45,253	Timothy J. Zarley
Associate	50,153	James J. Lynch
Associate	54,583	Scott R. Kaspar

Domestic Priority Information

Application::	Continuity Type::	Parent Application::	Parent Filing Date::

Foreign Priority Information

Country::	Application Number::	Filing Date::	Priority Claimed::

Assignee Information

Assignee name::	Lomont Molding, Inc.
Street of mailing address::	1516 East Mapleleaf Drive
City of mailing address::	Mt. Pleasant
State or Province of mailing address::	IA
Country of mailing address::	US
Postal or Zip Code of mailing address::	52641